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The
PULPIT
Christian Century

A Periodical of Contemporary Preaching

CHARLES CLAYTON MORRISON, *Editor*

VOLUME III | CHICAGO, AUGUST, 1932 | NUMBER 8

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Why We Suffer

BY J. A. MACCALLUM

For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. Hebrews 12:6.

PROSPERITY," said Bacon, "is the blessing of the Old Testament; adversity is the blessing of the New which carrieth the greater benediction and the clearer revelation of God's favor." But the great thinker was not entirely satisfied with this *obiter dictum* and went on to modify it by a more discerning observation: "Yet, even in the Old Testament, if you listen to David's harp, you shall hear as many hearselike airs as carols and the pencil of the Holy Ghost hath labored more in describing the afflictions of Job than the felicities of Solomon."

The problem of suffering, as it is called by the philosopher, is as perplexing as any that man has tried to solve. If, as we are impelled to believe, either through experience or faith, a good God is guiding the destinies of the universe and making it the friendly theater for our activities, why should he require or allow us to endure so much affliction and to shed so many tears? Man has pondered upon this question since he first began to think and though, as Bacon said, the Old Testament emphasizes material well-being, the story it unfolds is altogether too human to ignore this tragic element in life. Not only in the Psalms which run the gamut of almost all our moods and emotions, and in the drama of Job, which was written at a time when the old orthodoxy had broken down and men could no longer believe that suffering is a direct consequence of sin, but every now and then throughout the record of Israel's experience the question raised by the suffering of the innocent crops to the surface like a stream

25 Cents a Copy | Entered as second-class matter October 14, 1929, at Post Office at Chicago, Ill., under the act of March 3, 1879. Published monthly by The Christian Century Press, 440 S. Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill. | Two Dollars a Year

that reappears after having been hidden below the level of the earth.

God and Suffering

Yet notwithstanding this recognition of the problem, the Old Testament does not solve it and we can not deny that suffering presents a serious obstacle to faith. There is no full escape from the dilemma of Epictetus: "If God wishes to prevent evil but can not, then he is impotent; if he could, but will not, he is malevolent; if he has both the power and the will, whence then is evil?" The appeal of Christian Science depends in no small degree upon its conviction that suffering is evil and therefore contrary to God's will because he is good. If this assumption could be proved it is safe to predict that soon we should all be Christian Scientists. But the problem is not so simple nor can it be solved by pious affirmations of its non-existence. Suffering is woven into the fabric of our being. Animals suffer; so also do little children. The higher the point that life reaches, the more acute pain becomes. A Francis Thompson, that great poet of religion, declares with lyrical melancholy:

Nothing begins, and nothing ends,
That is not paid with moan;
For we are born in other's pain,
And perish in our own.

Why? This is the agelong question. Is pain an essential instrument in the development of character and even if it is, how does it come to be applied on so wide a scale and often with no apparent reason? Can the facts of suffering be adjusted to a satisfactory view of life so that we can go on in confidence that the good overbalances the evil of the world and that life is therefore worth while? This is no idle question. However practical and unreflective one may be, he is, though he be utterly unaware of it, an incipient philosopher. Every man seeks for a rationale of his experience and his ultimate peace of mind will depend upon his approximation to such a justification of the conditions under which life must be lived.

In answering our question it will help us to recall that there was a time when pain did not exist upon the earth. But that was before there was life, while the earth was without form and void and darkness still covered the deep. If the price of freedom from suffering is non-existence, only the thorough-going pessimist would make that choice. Few among us would go so far as to argue that life is not worth living. It is because we believe it to be so wonderfully rich in its possibilities that we seek to find ways of reducing its pain or at least reasons that will prove that it is of greater value than its cost.

Increased Sensitiveness to Suffering

The late Dr. E. E. Slosson, in an exposition of this theme from a scientific point of view, declared that "progress may be defined as increase in the capacity for suffering." As animals rise in the scale of being they become more sensitive and with growth of sensitivity their suffering increases. "The giant saurians that used to creep across our western plains were as big as a house, but their brains could have been put into a teacup. Not much chance for pain there. And finally man came, a creature built upon a new and improved plan; but his chief endowment was that he was able to suffer more." For man suffers not alone physically and immediately. His gift of memory enables him to recall the pains of other years and though it is true that these soon fade from his attention, when a parallel situation develops, he remembers them and is tortured by the fear that they may recur. He suffers also by anticipating the ills that may afflict him later on. Who has not spent ungrateful hours in picturing to himself the cruel possibilities of poverty, bereavement, or some other calamity that may eventually befall him? Closely akin to such forebodings in its effect upon personality is remorse which works like a canker in the mind, recalling the sins and errors of earlier days and raising the disturbing question as to whether their baneful effects are beyond remedy. Reflection is another factor in the human mind that adds to its pain. When we see the distress of those who are victims of a sinister fate through no fault of their own, disease, accident, or betrayal, whatever the cause may be, we are scourged by the fear that we may share their experience. Thus the suffering that is evident everywhere in nature rises to a towering climax in man.

In our museums of natural history we have stored the massive relics of many of nature's discarded types, for she has had to grope her way to a higher efficiency like any other inventor. These animals were protected by a thick and heavy defensive armor. So much of their energy was spent in carrying this burdensome load, the purpose of which was to guard them against pain, that they were beaten in the struggle for existence by animals with the nerves on the outside having only the slightest protection. As Dr. Slosson says: "The animals that were easiest hurt conquered those that were most protected." Goliath in his heavy coat of mail was beaten by the stripling David who was exposed to every blow but had the inestimable advantage of freedom of movement. Similarly the knights of the Middle Ages were driven from the arena by men without armor.

Lower and Higher Organisms

Even when we go farther and face the suffering involved in death, we see how necessary it is to progress. The protozoa, as they are called by the biologist, the simplest forms of life, never die except by accident. When they reach maturity they divide into two parts and continue their existence. There is thus a sense in which they are physically immortal. But they are no farther on their way toward achievement than when they first appeared in the primal ooze. On the other hand, with the higher organisms death intervenes so that experience and skill realized in one generation have the opportunity for a fuller development in the next. Were it not for this constant renewal of creative power man would long ago have reached the summit of his attainment. The older generation

always strives to hold the new in check, but death clears it from the stage and opens the sluices to progress. This brings its quota of poignant grief but there is no other way to advance.

In the perspective afforded by this background we are in a position to answer our question with more certainty and to interpret with a larger measure of authority both the experience and the teaching of Jesus. His suffering was in harmony with the essential conditions of life. It was a perfect demonstration of a law that lies at the very heart of existence. The cross is the perpetual symbol of his earthly experience.

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But we make a serious mistake if we restrict our conception of the cross to the instrument upon which he was put to death. Jesus lived upon the cross in the rejection of his countrymen, in the fickleness of their support, and in the failure of his disciples to grasp his purpose. He suffered the ignominy of persecution and the bitter humiliation of the misunderstanding of his family. "He was despised and rejected of men." Because he was made of the finest stuff his pain was immeasurably more intense than if his sensibilities had been of normal texture. And so he stands before mankind as the supreme exemplar, not only of conduct, but also of the attitude in which all men should face the trials and tribulations which they are sure, sooner or later, to experience.

The glory of Jesus as a spiritual hero and leader is revealed in this, that he never calls upon his followers to do that which he himself refused to do. If he had not suffered, his call to his disciples, each to take up a cross and follow him, would lose much of its force.

Suffering is the fire in which the soul is tempered and Jesus did not seek exemption from this universal law. Nor should we claim such exemption. Insofar as we are successful in securing cushions for ourselves by which to obtain immunity from pain, we are limiting our capacity for achievement. The men who have made history have not escaped struggle and sorrow. Probably the clam has done that as well or better than any other organism, but this explains its lowly place in the order of existence. True, it is natural that we should try to avoid suffering as far as we can. Few can sing with the Duke, in "As You Like It," "Sweet are the uses of adversity," with any degree of enthusiasm as they face their own afflictions. Yet Shakespeare was right. If a mother could protect her child against every pain, when at last he reached manhood he would be unable to adjust himself to the rough usage he is sure to get. Nor would he have sympathy for others in their afflictions.

Probably one of the most characteristic qualities in the mental attitude of our time is the desire to escape discipline and the pain that it involves. Doubtless this was always so, but it is more intense today because the chances of escape seem so much larger. Parents look for shortcuts in the training of their children so that they will not have to spend so much time on their books and will have more time for play. Men hope to get rich by a *tour de force* rather than through the arduous process of earning and saving. The mechanization of the arts is substituting machine made pictures and music for the personal aesthetic creations of former generations. It would be foolish to suggest the abolition of or destruction of the radio, gramophone, or moving pictures, but they should not be allowed to obscure our vision of the real values. These are personal and can not be produced in the mass or by standardized processes.

No Cross, No Crown

In our desire for ease and freedom from the pain of discipline we are in danger of losing many of life's deeper blessings. No cross, no crown. No toil and suffering, no personal achievement or mellowness of character. Such are the alternatives with which we are faced and they are not of our making. They were here when we were born and it is safe to predict that they will be here when we die. Everything we really have must be paid for. This is a law of the universe. In our experience there are many apparent miscarriages of justice. Rewards and punishments often have little or no apparent relation to merit or demerit. Yet this is incidental after all. Our main business is not to live happily and to receive recognition for our services and appreciation of our worth; it is in every case the making of a soul. Nature, experience, and the gospel of Jesus alike confirm the observation that this can not be achieved without suffering. The diamond must be cut before it breaks the white light into its component colors and flashes them before our enraptured eyes. The grapes must be crushed before the wine can gladden the heart. Dante had to thread a world

of fire before he reached the austere altitudes of immortality. Jesus had to drain the brimming cup of woe to its dregs before his earthly mission received the seal of everlasting saviorhood. So each of us in his modest theater of action must carry his cross without complaint if he is to realize the best that life has to give. We can be "partakers of the divine inheritance" only as we have been "partakers of the divine sufferings."

It would be foolish and conceited to assume that these reflections afford an exhaustive or fully satisfying answer to our question, Why do we suffer? The ultimate solution of this problem is as far beyond the reach of our minds as the explanation of life itself, of which it is but a single aspect. In thinking about such insoluble questions we are responding to an inner urge that derives from the primal Source of our being. Our contentment would be only that of sheep or goats—a blind life within the brain—if we did not seek for as many answers as we can get. But when knowledge has done its best we have not traveled far; from that point on we must walk by faith. Let knowledge grow from more to more, still we shall never understand the baffling mysteries that enshroud our existence. We see through a glass darkly. We can but trust that all things work together for good and that suffering is a part of the process, "that somehow good will be the final goal of ill." If this is our attitude, with St. Paul we can affirm, each in his own accent and with his own intonation: "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

A Nameless Quartet

By Claude Allen McKay

Thou art not far from the kingdom. Mark 12:34.

IN THE story of Jesus and his ministry, mention is made of four young men who came near being enrolled with his chosen disciples, but were not. Two of this nameless quartet asked to be admitted as disciples, but the Master rejected their application. The other two Jesus invited to become disciples but, according to the record, they declined the invitation.

We wish we could call these four young men by name but their names are not given. They remain a nameless quartet. Nor is that strange. You can recall the names of the mountain climber who reached the summit but the names of those who started and came near the goal, but failed of final achievement, you have forgotten. In your class reunions you seldom mention the fellows who almost graduated but did not quite make the grade. Strange or cruel as it may seem, it is a fact that history perpetuates longest and loudest the names of those who have either achieved a notable success or made a tragic failure.

For instance, our attention has been focused for nineteen centuries on the twelve disciples who were actually enrolled. Their names we know. We have borrowed their names to bestow upon our children and churches, chapels and cathedrals, monasteries and brotherhoods, guilds and fraternities. And we do well. Such is the established custom of all peoples. Their heroes and benefactors are remembered by name, their deeds recounted, and their virtues extolled.

Likewise "the evil that men do lives after them." The historian causes to be remembered those who have tragically failed as well as those who have signally succeeded. Thus the name of "Judas, the betrayer" persists. And we all know the name of Benedict Arnold even though only in apology or shame. A modern poet, Elinor Lennen, has put these patriotic words into the mouth of Ananias—

> I could be glad to face oblivion,
> But no—
> Forgetting is too kind a punishment.
> So I am crucified anew
> By their remembrance of my wrong,
> And "Ananias" is the monument
> They raise for those who sell great trust
> And think that paltry gain can make them rich.

It is very seldom, however, that we sit in mystic memory with those who have neither won the crown of success nor the stigma of failure—those who have come near being winners, but not quite! And yet I doubt not that among that company, found in every generation, there are some who deserve our acquaintance. That would seem to justify a brief study of this "nameless quartet"—four young men who came near being numbered with Jesus' disciples, but not quite! Two volunteered, but Jesus declined their application. The other two were invited, but they declined the invitation. In two, we have a willingness with a lack of qualification. In the other two, we have qualification but an unwillingness to accept on the Master's terms.

The Scribe Who Loved Ease

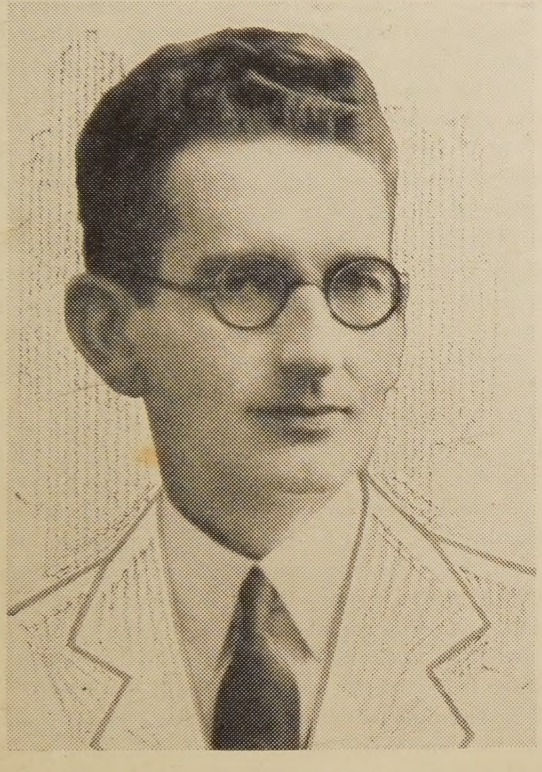
One day a scribe said to Jesus, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." Jesus' answer was kind but firm. He said: "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." It was the Master's way of saying, "You are accustomed to ease, routine, regular meals and a soft bed at night, but to follow me would mean hardship, privation, ridicule, sacrifice. You would not be happy nor effective. I like your enthusiasm; your interest is encouraging; but you haven't the metal for pioneering. You had best continue as a scribe."

The kingdom of Jesus has enlarged its borders and diversified its activities a thousand-fold since that day. Doubtless there is a place for the scribe today—the easy-going, regular, dependable disciple who makes little noise and breaks no records but gladly fits into a groove, bears the strain and answers "present."

In that day things were different. There was a place

for none but men with iron in their blood; men who cared not whether they had "where to lay their heads" at night, if only they might be pioneers of the kingdom. John the Baptist was such a one, and Paul was another. Some one has well said that "When Christ won Paul, he captured the Roman empire." Paul was not a mere scribe.

Business men know the dilemma which Jesus faced that day. Every big business has "scribes" knocking at its doors, saying, "I am ready to serve in most any capacity." But it is quite a different problem to find men who are made of pioneer stuff, who can introduce



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and establish the business in a new territory, who care little about their personal comfort if only they may accomplish a hard task and do it well.

The case of this scribe who came near being a disciple is universal. It is one of those cases, worldwide and age-long, in which a young man had interest and enthusiasm but lacked metal. A popular magazine recently carried in its joke column the remark of a young fellow, "My father would be surprised if he knew how I am getting along. He used to say to me, 'Son, I don't believe you will ever get a job,' and here I have had five jobs in five weeks." We all know that that is too serious to be a good joke. And yet he probably did not know, and could not understand why he was not wanted. That was part of the tragedy of the Scribe. Very often he must have wondered why Jesus declined his application but accepted the sons of Zebedee, the fisherman.

The general secretaries of our mission boards realize the thoughts and emotions which surged through Jesus' mind and heart that day. They too can find plenty of "scribes," but to find young men and young women of heroic mold who will ride the plains of North Dakota, or live among and serve the frontiersmen of New Mexico or Montana, or face the heat and jungle fever in India or China or Africa—that is much more difficult! It is the Aeolian harp, with strings tense and responsive, which makes music of the wind. It takes a plow with a steel point to turn the primeval sod.

Willing, But Unprepared

The other young man, who volunteered for discipleship but whose request Jesus denied, lived in the country of the Gaddarenes. He was a nervous wreck, a torment to himself and to his neighbors, until Jesus came into his life and brought calm and peace and self-control. Then when Jesus entered the boat and prepared to go back across the Sea of Galilee, this man asked to go with him and journey with him. But the man was unprepared for that work to which Jesus had called the twelve. Physically, mentally and spiritually, he was unprepared. He had the interest and the enthusiasm but he lacked the preparation. It was a sad hour for that man. Only those can sympathize who have shed bitter tears alone because an opportunity has opened with coveted possibilities but they are not prepared.

This case, you may suggest, is unusual. "It was not his fault, perhaps, but simply ignorance or lack of opportunity or a vicious social environment." Granted. But you meet men and women on the street every day, behind whose wistful eyes there is the ghost of a disappointed hope due to ignorance, lack of opportunity, wise counsel ignored or an unfriendly environment. "The man I might have been" haunts their day dreams; "the woman I had hoped to be" is become a receding star. Listen to our homely proverbs. They remind us how many have stood in the shoes of this Gaddarene; for often a proverb is a red lantern set at a point where experience dictates caution. "Strike while the iron is hot." "Make hay while the sun shines." "A stitch in time saves nine." "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." "Do it now." "Be prepared." Thus one generation crystalizes into a proverb a warning to those who follow, to take the long look ahead, and be spared the bitter disappointment of the Gaddarene. "I will get ready," Lincoln the unprivileged but undiscouraged frontiersman said, "and my chance may come." It came, and he was prepared.

Jesus' solution of this man's case however is most commendable. He gave the man a commission to fulfill—a hard one—something he *could do* with great value. This man could give his own personal witness. And, after all, what is of more value, even though in our day it has been shamefully commercialized? Nevertheless, from the beginning, the kingdom of Christ has depended most of all upon the testimony by word and deed of those for whom "the Lord hath done great things." So the Master said to this disappointed young man, "Go home to thy friends and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee."

Now, as we turn to contemplate the other two young men of this nameless quartet—the two whom Jesus invited to discipleship with him, but who refused

—we are surprised that any could refuse such an invitation. And yet, on second thought, we know that the number of those who have refused a similar invitation is larger than we like to confess. Perhaps, however, those two young men of old did not realize what they were rejecting and what infinite possibilities their acceptance would have opened for them. But does any one ever realize; can any of us ever know the infinite significance of such a refusal or of such an acceptance?

"First Let Me Go and Bury My Father"

One day the Master was talking with a young man, whom he evidently admired and in whom he saw qualities which fitted him for kingdom-building, so he said, "Come and follow me." But the candidate answered with an excuse, which closed the door of opportunity. Jesus could not use one who met the call of duty with an excuse. He said, "First let me go and bury my father and then I will follow." Jesus' reply may sound harsh. It was a quotation—a current maxim—"Let the dead bury the dead."

This man was a traditionalist. Those who are familiar with the customs of the orient tell us that this man did not ask to go home to his father's funeral but that, in all probability, his father was living and would live for years. What he meant was that, as the eldest son, he was expected to stay at home until his father was laid away and all the rites performed according to the law of custom and tradition. Here again we see that Jesus required men of heroic mold—not mere traditionalists but daring adventurers.

If it were needed we could offer a word in behalf of the traditionalist because, the fact is, each of us who is past forty has stood in this man's shoes and felt a similar impelling duty. That which our fathers and mothers honored and taught us to honor has a strong hold upon us, and usually we are the better for it. That which our fathers and mothers taught us to do or not to do holds us with a strong grip. Every nation leans heavily for support upon those who are traditionalists. "When I think of loyalty," writes Frank P. Tebbets, "there always arises the mental picture of that Roman soldier whose skeleton, incased in full armor, and clutching a spear and a shield with bony fingers, was found at its post, buried beneath the rubbish of centuries, in the ruined city of Pompeii. In the place where the skeleton was found there were no other human remains. All other inhabitants of that brilliant resort—merchants, officials, nobles, priests, scholars—had fled for safety before the impending horror. Only the sentry had stood fast in the path of the great disaster. Loyalty held him to his post while the world tottered."

However, Jesus faced a different situation. As yet his new kingdom had no tradition to defend. He did not need "ballast" but "sails." He did not require disciples to defend a yesterday but to carve out a tomorrow. And since Jesus had Simon Peter in his cabinet, he had no need for another traditionalist. Peter was ever ready to draw his sword in defense of the status quo. And Peter's traditionalism was quite bothersome when Paul sought to bring Gentiles into the Christian church without requiring the old Jewish ceremonial rites. "Let the dead bury the dead," Jesus said to this nameless traditionalist, and that closed the issue. It took courage, but destinies were at stake.

The Rich Young Ruler

The last member of this nameless quartet is more familiar to us. He seems to have made a more profound impression on the gospel writers; doubtless because he was a "rich young ruler." He was invited to discipleship with Jesus but he declined. He had caught a vision which led him to seek Jesus and ask, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?"—but evidently the terms were not acceptable. He enjoyed wealth and social favor. Jesus let him know that these were absorbing all his time and thought and strength, and if he really did wish that life which is the joy of the Christ way of living he must convert these holdings into means of service, and come and companion with Jesus. At this, he turned away sorrowful. We are sorry for him. He knew not the extent and import of his choice.

It is another case of one who had the quality but lacked the willingness, who could but would not, who possessed the talent but refused to dedicate it. Faith is not merely something to be declared; it is something to be lived.

The interview of this young man with Jesus is a drama, illustrating for us one of life's most difficult attainments. That is the fine art of being a dreamer who keeps his feet on the ground and his hand set to a worthy task. To be not merely a dreamer, nor a drudge, but a dreamer who builds as well as dreams, a worker with a vision—that is indeed a fine art! This young man had a vision—a desire that he "might have eternal life" as he saw it in Jesus—but he lacked the courage to realize his vision, to fulfill his dream.

It is awesome to think that the most momentous decision in a man's life can be described in four words—"he turned away sorrowful." This young man turned his back on Jesus that he might continue to be counted among the wealthy and among the first families. He turned his back on a life of self-denial, self-giving, self-realization that he might return to a life—self-centered, self-satisfied, self-righteous. He turned his back on an unprecedented opportunity to realize "eternal life" and also fadeless fame, that he might return to a comfortable oblivion.

These Four Have Many Successors

Would that we could say that this "nameless quartet" passed with that generation, and that no one has arisen to take their mantle and play their role! Instead, we know that we could furnish a name for each of these nameless young men, and at various times the name would be yours or mine! It is chiefly because we have at times buckled on their sandals and voiced their sentiments that their cases are so pointed and pertinent. Indeed, their successors are legion. You met that "scribe" today. You see him often. That disappointed young "Gaddarene" tugs at your heartstrings more than he dreams. The "traditionalist" we know. We admire his loyalty more than his courage. He

would die defending the old order but is too fearful to adventure into an uncharted future.

And it is surprising how the "rich young rulers" are increased in our time. Our college dormitories and fraternities swarm with these promising young egoists. Every country club and luncheon club can boast of quite a goodly number. The "rich young ruler"—and the rich ruler who is no longer young—are prominent in many of our churches. We are happy to testify that we know some of them who have accepted Jesus' terms of discipleship and are dedicating their wealth and their social influence to the prevention and cure of the same social ills which Jesus pointed out to the "rich young ruler" of old.

I came across this poem, by Edgar Frank, and I was discouraged because it seemed to justify the very choice which the rich young ruler made.

"How can you live in Goshen?"
Said a friend from afar,
"This wretched country town
Where folks talk little things all year
And plant their cabbage by the moon."
"Said I—I do not live in Goshen;
I eat here, sleep here, work here;
I live in Greece
Where Plato taught
And Phidias carved
And Epictetus wrote;
I dwell in Rome
Where Michael Angelo wrought
In color form and mass,
Where Cicero penned immortal lines
And Dante sang undying songs.
Think not my life is small
Because you see a puny place;
I have my books, I have my dreams:
A thousand souls have left for me
Enchantment that transcends
Both time and place.
And so I live in Paradise,
Not here."

I wondered if we could so easily lose our social vision and join company so complacently with those who prefer Paradise to Goshen. But I had not long to wait. A voice from the wilderness cried out its protest in a later issue of The Christian Century, in which the original poem appeared:

No? So you don't live in Goshen.
You eat there, sleep there,
Draw from there your life,
And live in sunny Italy and Greece.
Perhaps, if you *should live in Goshen*—
Since you know Rome and Greece and Paradise—
The "small talk" might grow larger, and men come
To plant their dreams and not their cabbage in the moon.
The soil is good in Goshen:
Stars shine; skies are clear and fair.
If you should *live* in Goshen,
They and you might see
New worlds of life and peace
Now hid from them and thee.

Nor was this to be the only protest. It began to appear that the rich young ruler's choice has less favor in our day than we thought. It looks as if the Master's way may yet be found to be indeed "eternal life," both for this present pilgrimage and for the world to come. In a later issue of The Christian Century, another poet-prophet found utterance:

Why, yes I live in Goshen:
This little town
Of little streets and ways,
And little folk and great.
I eat, sleep and work here,
But most of all I live here—
And laugh and weep
And agonize and pray.
I dream in Greece and Rome
And try to bring my dreams to Goshen,
And sometimes do, but mostly fail.
But here I meet my friends—
My living breathing fellows—
And we walk and think
And bless and hurt each other every day.
Here I see great men sometimes small
And small men sometimes great,
And out of all Goshen's ugliness
Great beauty grows.
And so I live in Paradise
Right here.

Thus does this modern poet cause us to hear anew the very commission to which Jesus called that clean, educated, cultured, privileged young man of old; and the same call knocking at your heart's door and mine.

Unstable Souls

By Teunis E. Gouwens

Unstable souls . . . 2 *Peter* 2:14.

WHEN Peter referred to unstable souls he knew whereof he was speaking. He had not forgotten how quickly his own vigorous profession of allegiance to Christ had been followed by weak denial. And in the course of his own ministry he had often witnessed the ease with which converts could forsake the path of the ideal and go astray. From his time to our own, human nature has been demonstrating its infirmity by the frequency of its moral lapses. We need hardly look beyond our own experience for confirmation of the statement that the maintenance of equilibrium in the vicissitudes of daily life is no mean achievement. When Paul wished to indicate a goal which merits the highest human endeavor, he said, "Take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." Let no man lightly dismiss this exhortation as insignificant. Every day men and women who think they stand, collapse. Their unstable souls are beguiled, and only when the fall has become a fact do they realize how insecure they were. We do well, therefore, to give earnest heed to our stability.

I am aware, of course, that instability is not to be

wholly condemned. There are few things in life for which some word of approval cannot be spoken. If a man wished to write a thesis on the merits of restlessness, he could find abundant material to support his case. For whatever else may be said of our world, it must be said that it is a changing world. In the vegetable kingdom, in the animal kingdom and in every department of human life, change is incessant. Even the thing that has no life is subject to the elements that play upon it. The world does not stand still. Our God is a working God. He has a purpose, and the fulfillment of his purpose presupposes progress. When progress stops, death begins. And progress means change. The man who insists on staying where he is, is simply insisting on his own undoing. Not only our growth, but our very life depends on our ability and determination to make continual readjustments and advances.

Great Deeds of Restless Spirits

Begin as far back as you like and you will find that throughout the course of history forward movements have been inaugurated by restless spirits. Abraham, leaving his old home for an unknown country, was a restless spirit. So was Moses when he undertook the liberation of a race of slaves. So were the prophets in their vehement protests against existing conditions. So were the early apostles who went about turning the world upside down. The great reformers, Luther, Calvin and Knox; the pilgrim fathers, whose zeal for freedom neither sea nor wilderness could daunt; the early pioneers in our country, whose westward march no peril could check; the missionaries who carried the message of the cross to the uttermost parts of the world; scientists, artists and musicians, whose lives were under inescapable constraint until the truth they sought had been discovered or until the dreams and visions and harmonies which flooded their souls had found expression; explorers and adventurers who scaled mountains, flew over seas and surveyed the ice-bound poles of the earth—these all were restless spirits. Seek the origin of an outstanding achievement in any realm of life and you will find it to be an unstable soul.

But this restlessness which compels readjustment, discovery, advance and constructive action is not what the apostle had in mind when he spoke of unstable souls. He was thinking rather of uncertainty, indecision, irresolution and lack of steadfastness. And we need hardly be told that one who addresses himself to the condition indicated by these words addresses himself directly to our own lives. For we all know what it means to be tossed about, imperiled and distressed by conflicting ideas, desires and plans.

Many lives are intellectually unstable. I am not referring now to those who are on the verge of insanity, nor to those who are the temporary victims of nervous disorders. I am thinking of people who give every appearance of being sane and who behave with a good degree of rationality. I am thinking of people like ourselves. We do our daily work and, in its performance, give no sign of a lack of mental balance. We take our accustomed part in the activities of the home, the church and the social life of our community, and no outward irregularity betrays an inner confusion.

Doubts and Questionings

But, for most of us, the confusion is there. It may be only spasmodic or it may be chronic. In either case, it is sufficiently real to cause us no small measure of concern. Questions to which we are unable to secure satisfactory answers persist in asserting themselves. What is the origin and nature and destiny of this world? Who and what is God and how can we be sure that he exists? Why have we been placed in this world? What is expected of us? What happens after death? These and many other questions mock our pretense of intellectual security. When we begin to demand proofs for the things we have been taught to believe we are alarmed by their scarcity and inadequacy. No thinking man can long be wholly free from doubt.

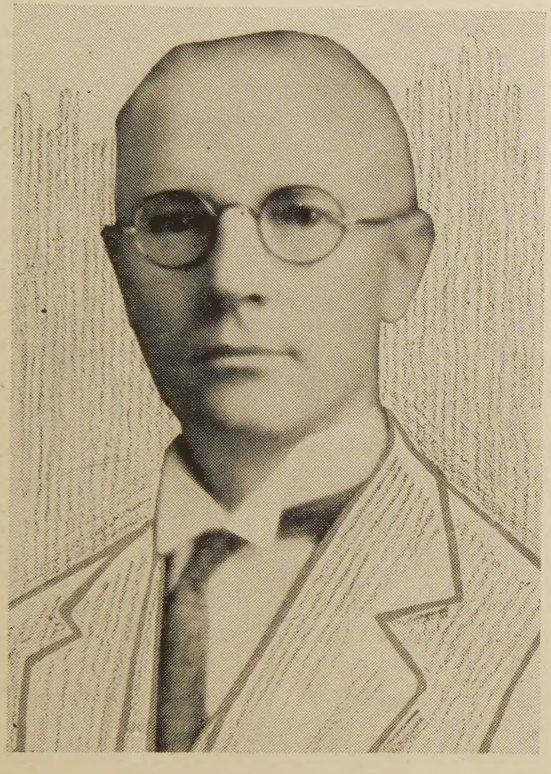
Nor is it doubt alone that characterizes our intellectual instability. Our trouble is increased by the fact that we are largely ignorant. I am not referring now to the meagerness of learning on the part of the masses. For often those who actually know the least are the least disturbed by the poverty of their mental state. I am thinking rather of those who are educated. The further our minds press into the mysteries of the universe, the more keenly we feel the littleness and insecurity of our understanding. It may be true that the high school boy today knows more than the sage of a thousand years ago. But as that boy advances in learning, his sense of the vastness of the unknown that lies before him will correspondingly increase. Other ages may have been ignorant but, in view of the discoveries that have been made in every realm of science, discoveries which only a handful of professionals even pretend to understand, in view of the unexplored territory to whose existence each new discovery testifies, and in view of the hesitancy with which the discoverers announce their findings, no age, perhaps, has been as acutely aware of its ignorance as ours. And it is this awareness of ignorance that robs our minds of their stability. New theories and catchwords which sound plausible toss our uncertain brains to and fro and complete their distracting work by casting us at last into a sea of almost hopeless bewilderment.

"Mental Weather"

And what is true in the sphere of the intellect is true also in the sphere of the emotions. Our emotional variability finds expression in at least four forms. It finds expression, for one thing, in our changing moods. In an essay on "Moods and the Ideal," which appears in his book, "Life and the Ideal," J. Brierley says, "A man's mood is the incalculable part of him. It is his mental weather, and, like the weather, the cause of change is hid in mystery. The mood suffuses and colors his thinking, but is itself beyond his thinking. Under its power the man, while in the same outward circumstances, is one thing today and another tomorrow. Now you have him bathed in sunshine, anon wrapped in deepest gloom." The thing to which Brierley refers is so familiar to us all and has caused

us all so much anxiety and pain that I need not enlarge upon it.

Sometimes our emotional instability asserts itself in fear. Let us not boast too loudly that we have outgrown superstition. Perhaps our universe is no longer peopled with demons and we may no longer believe in ghosts. But the emotion has not vanished with these imaginary objects which in previous generations aroused it. We are still afraid, and our fears continue



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to upset us even after we know how unreasonable they usually are. We are afraid of our work, afraid of disease, and afraid of death. And each one of us, in his own specific sphere, finds unnumbered events and circumstances to arouse his anxiety and to rob him of his peace. Fear is one of the chief enemies of tranquillity. The testimony of our own experience here is abundantly corroborated by the persistence with which Jesus, who perfectly understood human life, addressed himself to the banishment of apprehension and anxiety from the human heart.

Emotional Instability

Further, our emotional instability is attested by the ease with which we lose our temper. We have a colloquial expression which aptly describes a frequent occurrence in our lives. We say of a man, "he flares up." And when we say it of others, let us remember that others say it also of us. Something does not fit, somebody makes a remark which is unintentionally cutting, somebody apparently slights us, and in a flash we flare up. We are too touchy, too explosive, and by our outbursts of temper we make ourselves and others miserable. Irritability is one of the marks of an emotionally unstable soul.

And once more, our lack of stability is evidenced by the readiness with which we yield to temptation. We pledge our allegiance to a lofty ideal, and then, in an unguarded moment, we become traitors to it. Often our strength, through neglect, turns out to be our weakness. And if even our strength becomes our weakness, how utterly frail we are!

Our instability shows itself, then, in both our intellectual and our emotional life. It follows that it must manifest itself also in our action. For our behavior is determined largely by our thinking and our feeling. Many of our daily duties are performed with a regularity which is maintained by habit. But our new adventures, the performances which are born of initiative, are often as surprising as they are unpredictable. A man ruins his home or cheats in business or, what is sometimes equally unexpected, he rises to some heroic and magnanimous deed, and we say, "I never would have thought it of him." Our conduct is not consistent, and our inconsistency announces to the world that our souls are not stable.

In this review of our instability we have already intimated some of the causes of our lack of firmness. But in order that we may overcome our fault it is important that a brief word on these causes should more definitely be spoken.

The Lack of Convictions

For one thing, our souls are unstable because we are not adequately supported by strong convictions. In his book, "The Certainty of God," Dr. James Gordon Gilkey tells of an experience in a college dormitory. He says, "Along the wall in the corridor were several niches, designed for the busts of eminent individuals. One of the students paused before an empty niche, took a pencil from his pocket, and drew on the wall a large question mark. His companion stared in surprise, and then asked innocently, "Who's that for?" "That," said the first student, grimly, "is for God." In the minds of multitudes of people, young and old, God is little more than a huge interrogation point. The life that does not rest on certain firm convictions concerning God and the human obligation is bound to be unstable. Years of routine may issue in no disaster, but when a crisis comes the man who has no deeply rooted beliefs is almost sure to fall.

The sense of security which strong convictions impart finds beautiful expression in a poem by Washington Gladden:

> In the bitter waves of woe,
> Beaten and tossed about
> By the sullen winds that blow
> From the desolate shores of doubt,
>
> While the anchors that faith had cast
> Are dragging in the gale,
> I am quietly holding fast
> To the things that cannot fail.
>
> I know that right is right;
> That it is not good to lie;
> That love is better than spite
> And a neighbor than a spy;

I know that passion needs
The leash of a sober mind;
I know that generous deeds
Some sure reward will find;

That the rulers must obey;
That the givers shall increase;
That Duty lights the way
For the beautiful feet of Peace;

In the darkest night of the year,
When the stars have all gone out,
That courage is better than fear,
That faith is truer than doubt.

And fierce though the fiends may fight,
And long though the angels hide,
I know that Truth and Right
Have the Universe on their side;

And that somewhere beyond the stars
Is a Love that is better than Fate;
When the night unlocks her bars
I shall see Him, and I will wait.

Again, our souls are frequently unstable because we lack sound standards. We are too ready to measure our obligations by the conduct of those with whom we associate. But we associate with all varieties of people, and the result is that the criterion by which we judge ourselves fluctuates. There is a large measure of virtue in being all things to all men, if our purpose is by all means to save some. But there is little to be said for the spirit which lightly casts aside domestic restraints on foreign soil with the plea that in Rome it is proper to do as Romans do. This plea is often used to justify conduct which far exceeds in reprehensibility the customs after which it is presumably patterned. Many cities owe their reputation for license not so much to the behavior of their own citizens as to the misbehavior of outsiders who have come for a frolic. The instability of our lives would rapidly diminish if we had the manhood to control ourselves by abiding standards rather than by changing environment and questionable custom. Truth is truth and right is right and purity is purity wherever we are. And let us remember that we make our nearest approach to a true interpretation and application of a moral standard when we think of it in the highest terms and when we conform to its most rigorous demands.

Purposeless Lives

Further, our souls are often unstable because we have adopted no lofty purpose. Too many lives are aimless. And in their aimlessness they dissipate their energies and issue in wasteful confusion. When you find yourself futilely going from pillar to post, check yourself by this resolute saying of one of the world's most steadfast souls: "This one thing I do." A sincere appropriation of this motto will go far toward redeeming the lives not only of those who virtually have no aim at all but also of those who are torn by conflicting ambitions. No soul can long be stable which is not dedicated to an overmastering purpose.

But if these are among the reasons for our instability a few rules for securing the poise we covet at once become obvious. In the first place, take time to reflect on the meaning of life. Our distractions rob us of our equilibrium largely because they first rob us of the hour of quiet meditation. Many of our doubts concerning God and the meaning of life continue to upset us because we do not face them squarely. Deep convictions are not produced by superficial living. They are born only of personal experience and honest thinking.

The second rule for securing poise is this: master your circumstances. Personality is the greatest force we know. If environment can influence our lives, our lives can also influence environment. It is true that there are situations in which we are almost irresistibly swept off our feet. But the significant thing is that even in the most violent turmoil there are always a few souls which maintain their balance. It is a testimony to the superiority of personality over circumstances. There are environments which seem oppressive enough to suffocate any aspiring spirit. But the significant thing is that noble souls have emerged from even our worst slums. It is again a testimony to the superiority of personality over adverse conditions. The lesson is plain. Often our lives are at sixes and sevens because we whine about conditions when we should be summoning our heroism and rising above them.

Striving for the Best

The third rule for securing poise is this: dedicate yourself to the ideal. In every realm of your activity, select the highest model and pattern your work after it. One hears a great deal of disparagement of the best. We are told not to take the ideal seriously because in daily life it will not work. We pride ourselves on our practicalness, but we forget that the most practical course is not that which issues in an immediate and trivial gain but rather that which brings a treasure which moth and rust cannot corrupt. It is only in the possession of such a treasure that the soul can live in abiding peace. And only he who has the courage to pursue the ideal can amass such a treasure.

And this brings us to the fourth and final rule for securing poise: take hold of life in the spirit of Christ. The dominating factor in the life of Jesus was his implicit trust in God the Father. Why do we so persistently forget that this is God's world and that God is a Father who cares for his children? Dr. George A. Gordon, in his autobiography, "My Education and Religion," said of his grandfather that he was "a God-fearing man, and thereby made free from all other fear." The man whose attitude toward life can be summed up in those words is a man who takes hold of life in this spirit of Christ. God feeds the birds, he clothes the lilies, and he provides for his people. Then why should we be anxious, fearful and confused? "My God is the rock of my refuge," said the psalmist. It was such confidence that Jesus tried to instill into his followers. It constitutes the ultimate basis for human steadfastness and peace. Take Christ's yoke upon you —that is, take hold of life as he took hold of it—and the peace of God which is beyond our understanding will flood your soul.

Conquering Self-Distrust

By James Gordon Gilkey

He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it. Matthew 10:39b.

HOW MANY people face this problem? An immense number. Obviously it is one of the most common difficulties in school and college groups. Some time ago I gave at a girls' college an address on courage. Afterward two students came to me for personal interviews. Curiously enough, each girl asked the same question—"How can I conquer an inferiority-complex?" One girl was on the verge of tears as she described her habitual self-distrust, and the other broke down completely as she told of her lifelong battle with fear.

Similar situations crop up repeatedly in the men's colleges. Recently a boy in one of our New England institutions sent me this pitiful letter: "Two years ago I failed in some of my courses here, and I had to drop out of college for one year. My father was disgusted with my marks, told me he would not invest any more money in my education, and insisted that I take a business position. I went to work last winter, hated the job, and finally made up my mind to return to college even if I had to earn all my own way. This winter I have been back here, working night and day to keep up my grades and earn the money to pay my bills. But my worst difficulty lies somewhere else. I find there is something in my mind which keeps throwing me back into a state of introspection and hopeless self-distrust. I am afraid of myself, afraid to meet other people, and afraid I may be forced to do something in public. Sometimes I go almost frantic in my effort to conquer these feelings. I know they are not true, but I have about come to the end of my own resources in struggling against them."

What is the problem all these students are facing? The problem of mastering an inferiority-complex.

Fear Carry-overs from Childhood

Many individuals carry their self-distrust from youth into maturity. Although they gain a certain amount of emotional poise and fortify themselves with a certain record of achievement, they still find it highly difficult to generate an adequate self-confidence and assurance. Subjected to pressure, they slump into cringing fear. All of us know middle-aged men and women who are terrified at the thought of speaking in public, or who are hopelessly confused if they are asked to answer questions in the presence of a small group of friends. All of us also know adults who, suddenly confronted by new problems or new responsibilities, suffer a pitiful collapse. They insist they have not enough intelligence to solve the new problems, enough strength to carry the new responsibilities, or enough courage to face the failure which would inevitably ensue if they made the new venture. Sometimes these men and women lapse into chronic fear and become serious problems for their friends and relatives. In other instances they find, fortunately, the road to self-confidence and courage.

Dr. Fosdick gives this instance of a man who thus succeeded in solving his problem: "Recently a young man with a sad record of fear came to talk with me. In childhood his father used to beat him cruelly, and the shame of those thrashings cut deep into his sensitive soul. He developed a serious inferiority-complex, and from the days of his boyhood always pictured himself as a failure. He went through college, married, and entered a business career, but he was always haunted by the sense of personal inadequacy. Finally in despair he attempted suicide. Then one day, bewildered by his apparently unconquerable fear, he came to me. He was the saddest sight human eyes can look upon—a whipped and beaten man. Did he need to stay in that wretched condition? Certainly not! Together we found the way out. I saw him again a few weeks ago. He was on top of the world. He had found what the New Testament calls 'power to become'."

Jealousy of Superiors

But an inferiority-complex does not always disclose itself as fear. Sometimes it dons a disguise and emerges as a trait of an entirely different type. Think of the sensitive people you know. Most of them are suffering from a sense of inferiority, and their sensitiveness is a symptom of this deeper difficulty. Secretly believing they are not the equals of their associates, they are absurdly insistent that everyone in the vicinity give them a special share of attention, recognition, and praise. Or consider the jealous people you know. They too—in many instances, at least—are the victims of an inferiority-complex. Inwardly convinced that they are less gifted than their rivals, these individuals develop a furious jealousy of those who persistently outclass them. They criticize their competitors on the slightest provocation, and sit in glum silence when they hear those competitors praised.

But the most curious manifestation of an inferiority-complex is the habit of boasting. Psychologists now agree that the extraordinary boasts and taunts which we hear on the lips of little children are in reality attempts to compensate for a sense of extreme insignificance. "My father's got more money than anybody in the world!" "I can kick the football over the schoolhouse!" "Don't you wish you could do what I can do?" Through extravagant claims like these, youngsters who sense all too keenly their actual insignificance seek to give themselves the comforting illusion of greatness. How often older people fall into the same habit! We tell friend wife what extraordinary individuals we are, and we gather the children about us to relate to them the magnificent records we made in childhood. As we brag, and

as the cowed members of the family listen, our sense of inferiority vanishes and we feel we are in reality the extraordinary heroes our imagination and our conceit picture. Listen to this delicious verse by Edgar Guest, and study the psychology of the individual most deeply involved. A seven-year-old boy is speaking:

Once there was a boy who never
Tore his clothes, or hardly ever;
Never made his sister mad,
Was never spanked for being bad,
Always fit for folks to see,
Always good as good could be.
Liked to wash his hands and face,
Liked to work around the place;
Never, when he'd finished play,
Left his wagon in the way;
Always careful of his shirt,
Never got it streaked with dirt—
And that good boy married Ma,
And today he is my Pa.

How can we master an inferiority-complex? The first step is fairly clear. Let us ask ourselves whether our sense of inferiority tells us the truth about ourselves. In numberless instances it proves, on careful examination, to be entirely misleading. In the case of many people the inferiority-complex which burdens them is traceable to a faulty training received in childhood. Consider the young man who came to interview Dr. Fosdick. His sense of inferiority was the result of the thrashings his father gave him. The father, intending to discipline his son but knowing nothing of the emotional after-effects of such punishments, beat the boy repeatedly. By doing so he did not succeed in making his son a fine man. Rather he succeeded in saddling his son with a sense of shame and self-distrust which almost wrecked the boy's career. In this case the inferiority-complex, though persistent and severe, told nothing about the boy's abilities. All it did was to reveal his father's stupidity.

Expecting Too Much of Oneself

Or consider a case of a different type. Dr. Overstreet, professor of philosophy at the College of the City of New York, reports this incident: "A young man of twenty-eight, suffering from inordinate shyness, proved to have a strange history. His mother had stubbornly and persistently refused to let him take part in the normal activities and exploits of boyhood—baseball, football, swimming and all the rest. She was afraid he might be hurt. A fear of these things thus developed in the boy's mind, and with it a sense of personal shame. This lad naturally repressed his fear and his shame, and this repression created within his mind the haunting dread that his comrades would call him a sissy and a coward. So the boy kept more and more to himself, refrained from all rough-and-tumble contacts, and finally at twenty-eight found himself the sensitive, timorous, retiring, and ineffective person he was." What was the source of this man's sense of inferiority? Not a defect in himself. Rather his mother's stupid refusal to let him share the normal experiences of boyhood.

In the case of another group the misleading sense of inferiority has a different origin. It springs from the fatal habit of demanding the impossible from one's self. A few moments ago I spoke of two college girls who discussed with me their fear of themselves. One of the girls told me with evident distress that she was shy, sensitive, and unsuccessful. During her school and college course she had won no prizes and gained no recognition. When she finished her unhappy story I asked if she would be willing to tell me her age, and after a moment's hesitation she said she had just passed her eighteenth birthday. Eighteen, and disheartened about herself! Any older person could have explained to her the origin of her sense of inferiority. She was demanding from herself in youth qualities of character which seldom emerge before maturity. She was asking herself at eighteen for a record of achievement which most people do not win till twenty-eight, thirty-eight, or even forty-eight. This girl's sense of discouragement, powerful and persistent though it was, tells us nothing of her real gifts or her real prospects. All it tells us is that she is singularly impatient with herself.

Numberless older people repeat that girl's mistake. Many men in my profession expect themselves to preach as well at thirty as they will preach at fifty, and finding their youthful sermons are frankly mediocre, lapse into self-distrust and despair. Many business men expect themselves to show as fine a record during a period of depression as they show during a period of prosperity, and finding that their profits are decreasing steadily during the depression they foolishly conclude that they themselves are either stupid or ineffective. Many parents expect themselves to make as much out of an ordinary child as other parents are making out of a gifted child, and when they discover that their ordinary youngster achieves only an ordinary triumph they accuse themselves of failure in the task of training him. All these individuals are plagued by a sense of inferiority, but it is one which is entirely unreliable.

When you and I try to estimate the extent of our achievement, we must always take into consideration the amount of native ability we had to work with, the nature of the situation in which we found ourselves when we began our efforts, and the number and the quality of the opportunities presented to us. Only as we consider all these factors can we reach a fair verdict about ourselves, and escape a needless and a misleading sense of failure.

Victims of Misfortune

There is still a third group which suffers from an unfounded and a misleading inferiority-complex. It is made up of the people who have been the victims of misfortune and who, instead of recognizing that their disasters sprang from coincidence, insist on holding themselves responsible for them. No matter what their friends say and what common sense implies, they insist that they must have been at fault somewhere. As the years pass they thus develop a deepening sense of their own ineffectiveness.

One of our playwrights has recently written an ingenious play with alternative second acts. At the beginning of the play the hero stands before a table in the center of the stage, and as he leaves the room walks to the left of the table rather than the right. This prevents him from seeing a letter which had fallen to the floor at the right of the table. In the first of the alternative second acts, the story of his subsequent life is related, and the audience sees him in a relatively unsuccessful career. Then the hands of the clock are turned back, and the hero stands once more before the table at the center of the stage.

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This time, in leaving the room, he walks to the right of the table instead of the left. He sees the letter on the floor, reads it, learns the secret of the missing necklace, and leaves the room to begin a career of thrilling achievement and immense success. The course of his life hinged on a triviality—walking to one side of the table rather than the other.

That play does not misstate the facts of life. Coincidence—sometimes friendly and sometimes hostile—plays an enormous role in human affairs. Some individuals, meeting a succession of fortunate events, move forward with a bewildering speed to a position of great eminence. Other individuals, quite as intelligent and quite as deserving, meet a mishap which blocks them at the critical moment of their career. What follows if a man is foolish enough to assume full responsibility for everything that happens to him? If he proves successful, his habit of assuming full responsibility makes him intolerably conceited. If he proves unsuccessful, the same habit makes him develop a disastrous inferiority-complex.

You are beset by the sense of failure and the feeling of self-distrust? Ask yourself frankly whether that feeling tells you the truth about yourself. If it is the product of a faulty training in childhood, or the product of impatient and extravagant demands which you make on yourself, or the product of a series of mishaps for which you have stupidly assumed personal responsibility, then your sense of inferiority is utterly unreliable. You ought to disregard its verdicts entirely, as you would disregard palpable misstatements made by someone else. You ought to adopt an entirely new theory about yourself, an entirely new attitude toward yourself. You ought to assume that you have quite as many abilities and quite as many possibilities as the people about you. Freed from the incubus of fear, you can make in the years ahead quite as fine a record as they can.

Four Rules for Success

Suppose a man has come to this point in his thinking. Suppose he has succeeded in freeing himself from false notions of his own limitations. What are the further ways by which he can conquer self-distrust, build up self-confidence, and enlarge his ability to manage life successfully?

There are four simple rules all of us would do well to keep in mind.

I

The first is this: Whenever you face a task which frightens you, picture yourself as succeeding rather than failing in it. Psychologists call this process the reassociation of ideas, and it is undoubtedly one of the most significant sources of new courage.

Dr. J. A. Hadfield of King's College, London, gives this illustration of its power: "An aviator lost control of his plane, crashed to the ground, and was severely injured. After he recovered he suffered from chronic fear and severe headaches induced by fear. He was brought to us for treatment, hypnotized, and taken once more through the experience of the accident. When he came to the moment of the crash he nearly jumped out of his bed in terror. Obviously the event was associated in his mind with extreme fear. Still keeping him under hypnosis, we associated the experience with something entirely new—the idea that the disaster was now in the past, that he had escaped death, and that he had now nothing to worry about. The next day he was hypnotized again, put through the experience once more, and this time when the moment of the crash came we heard him saying quietly, 'Well, there goes the ship. But *I'm* all right.' The event, once associated in his mind with terror, was now associated with confidence. As a result the man was cured."

You and I, facing far less serious problems, can follow a modified form of the same technique. Are you one of the many individuals who are terrified at the thought of speaking in public? The basis of your fear is probably your habit of associating the idea of a speech with the idea of extreme nervousness, great discomfort, and abject failure. The two ideas

are bound together in your mind, and when you call up one the other invariably emerges with it. You can master your fear by the simple expedient of re-associating your ideas—tying the thought of making a speech with the thought of doing it easily and well, and actually enjoying the experience. This is the way by which hundreds of us who must speak constantly reduce to a minimum the wear-and-tear incident on innumerable public appearances. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." How true those old words are!

II

Another suggestion which has brought great help to some of us is this: As you struggle against self-distrust, remind yourself that there is, somewhere in your life, at least one outstanding ability. You are not an underprivileged individual living and working in the midst of geniuses. You have your gift just as other people have theirs. You can face them without apology and meet life without fear. One of William Beebe's books contains this interesting paragraph about three of the well-known birds: "Some day an epic will be written about the law of compensation, the most dramatic thing in nature. The peacock, with his aristocratic, incomparable display of color, has only a wretched squawk of a voice. The nightingale, embodiment of glorious, soul-stirring song, has plumage of dullest russet and gray. And the albatross, master-flyer, walks awkwardly along the sand, moving as though each step brought him acute agony."

Mr. Beebe here gives a negative statement of the law of compensation, pointing out the fact that there is one thing which each of these birds cannot do. He might have stated his principle in positive fashion, reminding us that there is one thing which each of these birds can do, and do in superlative fashion. The peacock may make a poor showing in a singing contest, but on dress parade he has no rivals. The albatross may walk clumsily, but once off the ground he is incomparable. The same law of compensation holds true in the human realm. There may be many find things you can not do, but there is—in some realm—at least one fine thing you can do. Why can you be sure? Because behind your life stand literally millions of forbears, each of whom contributed something to your inheritance. From that vast array of ancestors you certainly drew at least one outstanding ability. Believe in it, find it, focus your attention upon it. By doing this, hundreds of ordinary people finally break the spell of self-distrust, and emerge into the happiness and power of a courageous life.

III

The third suggestion follows naturally from the second. After you have located the thing you can do and do well, keep doing it until you give yourself the sense of achievement. Once you gain that sense, the grip of your inferiority-complex will be permanently broken.

Consider this incident reported by one of our welfare organizations: "A woman who was friendless, unhappy, and deeply depressed consulted one of our social workers. She said she found no pleasure in her work, and when she was asked what the work was, gave a long list of successive occupations. She had been a cook, a lady's maid, a clerk in a store, and an operator in a factory. She had also been a teacher of Spanish, and when she mentioned that job she showed her first and only evidence of enthusiasm. The social worker surmised that teaching was her gift, and finally learned that as a teacher this woman had found self-expression and had gained a genuine sense of achievement. Around that gift and that activity this woman's life was gradually rebuilt. The social worker found a few pupils for her, and as time went on their number increased. At the end of the first year of the new effort this woman was a more effective and a more stable personality than she had ever been before."

What brought this change? The sense of achievement. Without it even the most gifted individual sinks into listlessness and misery, as the records of prisons in the pre-modern era indicate. With the sense of achievement even an ordinary person can generate enough courage and self-confidence to face life bravely and happily. It makes little difference what the act is which creates the sense of achievement. One man may generate that feeling by preaching a sermon, another by repairing an automobile, and still another by playing an unusually clever game of bridge. But our own accomplishment, whatever it is, brings each of us the priceless sense of power. Without that sense of power happy and courageous living is almost impossible. Years ago Emerson suggested the truth in his memorable epigram, "Every man's task is his life-preserver."

IV

The final suggestion utilizes one of the truths discovered by Jesus. If you are beset by the fear of failure, remind yourself that life invariably brings each one of us the chance to find happiness. It brings this chance by putting us close to other people, and offering us the opportunity to help them. In forgetting ourselves and seeking to enrich life for others, we find, as Jesus discovered centuries ago, the joy that no disappointment or disaster can take away. You do not need to be rich, famous, or gifted to gain an immensely satisfying life. Such a life lies wide open to you, no matter who you are or where you live. It lies open in the needs of other people, and in your power to forget yourself and try to meet those needs.

A generation ago a ten-year-old girl was placed in an orphans' home in a midwestern state. The child was hunchbacked, sickly, and ill-tempered. By a curious coincidence her name was Mercy Goodfaith. Some months later a childless couple came to the home seeking a girl for adoption. The young woman explained, while the matron listened in surprise, that she wanted a child whom no one else would take. Mercy Goodfaith was brought into the room, and when this young woman saw her twisted back and her embittered face, she said quietly, "That's the child

I'm looking for." Thirty-five years later the inspector of orphanages in that same state wrote this report: "I have just been inspecting the home in such-and-such a county. The house is exquisitely clean, and the twenty children there are perfectly happy. I had supper there tonight, and afterward we all went into the parlor to sing. One of the girls played the organ, while all the others clustered about the matron. Two little girls sat on one arm of her chair, and two on the other. Two more children sat in her lap, and one of the larger boys who was on the floor took the hem of her dress and stroked it gently all the time we were there. The children adore that matron. She is Mercy Goodfaith—still hunchbacked, still ugly in feature, but with the light of happiness and achievement shining in her eyes."

"He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." Jesus had discovered the ultimate source of courage and hope.

Three Questions That Must Be Answered

By Roy H. Campbell

"But whom say ye that I am?"—Matthew 16:15.

MORE has been written and spoken about this questioner than of any other ever born. You would suppose the theme by this time would be dulled a bit. Yet, anyone, anywhere, proposing in first-hand fashion to speak his mind about Jesus will have ears before him listening with attention. Whether in magazine or book, from desk or platform, in the casual group in club or lounging car there will be those whose interest will kindle at once. Men are eager to know what impress this Nazarene of long ago makes on one of their own kind. If a man will seek to reveal accurately, without cant or propaganda, the likeness stamped on his inner spirit by Jesus, he will be dealing always with a human interest—fresh and vital.

I remember, from my student days, the extraordinary attention, the keen placing of mind and spirit entirely at the disposal of a certain speaker. It was when Dr. Wilfred T. Grenfell addressed, not a group of missionaries or ministers, nor yet a group interested in the wonders of his northland adventures, but the students of the University of California in the great Harmon gymnasium assembled, and his talk was about "What Jesus Means to Me." The quality of the man, his rare capacity for sincere public speech, of course entered into that singular raptness of attention. But others of like capacity on other themes have spoken there and missed altogether such deep consideration. These young men were eager to know about the one of whom Dr. Grenfell spoke.

This present question of our text is of a piece with those of all the centuries down. Men have asked others, "Who is this man?"

They would find out something more about his nature from the response to him of other humans than themselves. They would also look into their own minds and hearts to see what reflection his image makes there. It was this latter that the Master urged upon his companions that day.

In this query there are actually involved three questions. Let us look at them in turn.

I

First, there is this—"Who is Jesus?"

Curious as it is, this question was asked by Jesus himself. One fully acquainted with him would expect just that. There was about him an original cast of mind which would repudiate customary actions based on superficial, accepted codes. He would never stop to think "This question is not quite modest." It was important that there should be an outspoken appraisal of this leader by his followers. On what was revealed through it would hinge their reaction to the days of stress ahead. "Take up your cross and follow me," he had soon to say to them. "Can ye drink the cup that I drink of?" he must question, scrutinizing their capacity carefully for momentous matters. Before that very gathering broke up it is recorded that he began to show "how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things."

In view of all this one can see at once how natural the question was, indeed how necessary it was. The whole situation was based upon it.

We can understand that the major question which they were to consider about him was not, "What does he do?" That might well be asked of some—a scientist whose business was to survey the heavens and earth; an explorer who took his way into regions unknown; an inventor playing with new devices.

It was not, as it might have been of some, "What does he think?" This would be a proper question for possible disciples to ask before engaging fully with a philosopher who was outlining some system of thought, with a statesman who had some particular slant of mind, with an economist who thought business should march out on a definite path. The commitment they were to make would have regard, we feel sure, to the answer which they would find in their heart to this question "Who is he?"

What the Question Signifies

Just what are they asking when they put that query, just what have all the centuries asked, what are we asking today? Surely it is not his name, date and place of birth. These would do for the telephone directory, the census list, or the hospital records and the like, but these are not pertinent data here.

Surely when we say, "Who is he?" we are asking how much of a man is he, how many of those qualities that go to make up manhood have been mustered and put into his life? We are asking how those qualities are organized, what relation they sustain to each other, how they are co-ordinated under the dominance of that central principle we call personality. How

much courage, faith, insight, wisdom, how much kindness and sympathy has he? What is the measure of his sense of duty; how great his devotion? What are the inner contents of his life, and how are they utilized? These are the matters before our mind.

Then too we are asking, with them, how he affects our own lives. "Who goes there?"—the guard on duty sharply challenges the dim form drawing near in the darkness. He is not anxious about name, ancestry, or specifications as to height or color. He wants to know only one of two things, is he "friend" or "enemy." He is inquiring how this one approaching affects his own life and all those interests back of him which he has been appointed to keep in safety.

A captain might well ask his troops, "Whom say ye that I am?" For neither discipline nor the manual of arms, neither the commissary department nor the board of strategy, would determine the courage and vigor they would put into a charge. It would go on and on with increasing strength, or flag and peter out, largely by the quality of the man who ordered or led it. And too a father, any one of us, might put the question to his own growing son. "Son," he might say —indeed he does say unconsciously whether or no— "Whom say ye that I am?" And according to the answer the boy could give in his own heart would depend his allegiance, his stand perhaps in many a trying time.

Thus it was with Jesus facing his disciples on that critical day. He would lead them not only out into education, not only up into high courage, not only into strong manhood; he would lead them up into the highest place that human life could reach. That was his ambition. With this before them they gave their answer, assigning him a place of leadership worthy of that great accomplishment. "Who is Jesus?" the question was. He is, they said, from God—he is the son of the Most High.

II

The second question in the text is, "Who are you?" These men were looking at Jesus. They were casting up in their minds the months of their companionship. They were flavoring his words anew, tasting his attitudes, weighing his motives, testing his actions, arranging before them hastily his whole manner of living. They were putting his personality on the scale of their own judgments.

This was their major activity. But unconsciously they were also judging themselves. As they sought to answer this question, "Who is this man?" they were also registering an answer to the question, "Who are you?"

James and John were answering this question, as they made their reservation, reckoning him as one who could render them places beside him in his glory. Thomas was answering the question as he critically withheld his full vote from the majority finding. "I am one who doubts," he said. Judas answered it, "I am a selfish lover of money. I am a faithless friend. I am, in the end, a mass of flesh that shall swing on the limb of a tree." Peter was answering it also in his great reply. In this appraisal of Jesus these men also passed judgment upon themselves.

Those of us who have seen the Passion play at Oberammergau know indubitably that it was not the tall, serene form of the Master Man which stood up before the Roman governor on trial. It was Pilate, the young patrician, in whose face and troubled movements we could see the judgment being rendered against himself. How he strove in those critical moments to lift his own courage up to the point where

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it would respond to the clarity of his own discernment! And when he abruptly broke the rod of authority within his hands and cast its pieces down upon the step, we knew that he walked out with the verdict against him.

Man is not yet the ruler and arbiter of the universe. He is in a distinctly subordinate position. When the scientist addresses nature, he does so humbly. Einstein does not write the laws of the heavens above nor lay down the forms in which its lovely embodiment shall be molded. With humility and devotion he studies those organized rules which have been deposited in the very structure of nature itself. The elemental laws of beauty are not amenable to majority vote, and goodness, righteousness, nobility of character, kindness, courage—all these are eternal, and when one comes before them they must of necessity judge his own life.

This is why the older teachers of religion have always insisted on the "conviction of sin." They have sought the salutary lesson which comes to one when he looks with open eyes on the face of goodness and then looks in turn at himself. We need to learn this.

who have been ready to test the church and find it wanting. A deeper insight would teach us that the church is not on trial. This generation is on trial. The church is the communion of every soul, born upon the earth, with the Father in heaven.

This generation is to be weighed as to its ability to express that relationship in visible terms. And when it does express it here or there by the achievement of devout people, those who turn from it to excitement, to thrills, to money-splendor, deserting its quietness, its faith, its eternal ways—they are passing judgment upon themselves.

In Jesus of Nazareth there were great elemental, unchangeable values. They were like the compass pointing steadily, directing the traveler toward the north. And those who come before Jesus see whether they are taking that steady path or going on some trivial way of their own.

This day these disciples answered the question, "Who are you?" In that response which came from the lips of their blessed spokesman they found themselves saying: "We are not really of this world. These matters of trade and dispute, of striving and gain, do not satisfy us. We are of heaven; we belong, with you, to God."

A Pastoral Prayer

By Harry Emerson Fosdick

ETERNAL GOD, high over all, blessed forever, far above us and yet within us, we worship Thee. As every ray of sunshine leads back to the sun, so in Thy sanctuary teach our thoughts to travel up the road of Thy benedictions to Thyself.

Through another week we have been tempted to be careless and ungrateful. Like streams flowing through our common days, goodness has been richly given and we have been thoughtless of the fountain. O God, today be to us the friend behind all friendship, the spring of all beauty, the source of all goodness.

Save us from dishonesty and every crooked way as we worship here. Let us not come before Thee in court garments to appear as we think Thou wouldst like to see us. Let us stand before Thee as we are. If today our spirits are full of rebellion, make us candid with Thee. Let us bring our lamentations and resentments into Thy presence and speak them out frankly before Thy face, complaining that life has not been just to us and that we have been ill treated. But, O God, help us to stay long enough in Thy presence for Thy healing hand to be laid upon us. Like storm-tossed seas when the wind goes down growing quiet, so bring Thou us to peace.

If we stand before Thee with sins in our lives for which we are not pentinent but which we dearly love, help us to be frank with Thee. Save us from the futility of pretending penitence when we have it not. Grant us the grace of honesty to stand before Thee saying, O God, behold! what Thou hatest we love. Nevertheless give us grace to stay long enough in Thy presence for Thee to throw Thy light upon the loveliness of life until we are drawn to that. Let not Satan beguile us by fashioning himself as an angel of light. Fashion Thyself in the eyes of Thy servants in beauty, goodness, and truth this day, until we love the highest when we see it, and hate our sin.

We do not ask that Thou shouldst do for us anything that we desire. We ask that Thou shouldst do in us what Thou dost desire. We come before Thee with our need of strength. The sea of life is great and our ships are small. The mountains of life are high and our paths lead over them. We need some wayside fountain of refreshment. We need another glimpse of Thine eternal stars. We need a margin of reserve around our need. O God, that we might be strengthened with might by Thy spirit in the inner man!

We come with our need for courage. Thou living Spirit, walk through this bowing congregation and lay Thy hands on men and women outwardly placid and comfortable, inwardly whipped and beaten. For life has laid a heavy weight on some of us; death has come into our household and we have been disappointed in our friends; discouragements have met us in our practical affairs and some of us know not how the next year's living may be achieved. O God, we need the spirit of our fighting sires, who revealed the splendor of their souls when days were difficult. Speak to us, saying, Be not afraid.

We come with our need for magnanimity. Life harasses us; we grow exasperated over many things and lose our amiable souls in bitterness. Let Thy love be shed abroad in our hearts; bring us such sympathy and pity for this strange life of humankind, lifting us to such a new altitude above the mists of our exasperation that we may with broad perspective regard our fellows and cease our resentfulness.

As thus we pray for our private lives, we remember the great causes of our generation. Upon the churches of the Christ, upon all men, of whatever name or sign, who in sincerity and truth worship Thee today, upon our schools and colleges, upon our hospitals where lie our sick, upon all agencies of philanthropic endeavor sacrificially laboring for the good of man, upon our nation, its President and its government, and all those who love the coming of world-wide peace, we pray Thy blessing. Send forth from this sanctuary this day, we beseech Thee, soldiers of the common good with new faith, new hope, new power, to labor till Christ's kingdom come. Amen.

III

The third question involved here reaches the highest of all. It is no less than, "Who is God?"

Just as soon as one begins to ask about man he is immediately set on his way toward an inquiry about God. If it were possible to keep all questions about a man within the limits of his own body, this would not be. It is simple enough to satisfy the most curious, well within the limits of the territory of the flesh, providing he inquires only about a man's height, weight, his specific gravity. He may press even more deeply and seek to know about the mechanism of heart and lungs, the movements of the blood and respiratory system, and still stay close at home. But when he seeks to know of man's activity, he must go outside. He must have the surface of the world before his eyes, the things of the world in sight with which his hands deal.

When you ask, "Who is man politically?" you ask what communities are—how nations gather their life. When you ask what he is esthetically, you are questioning the whole world of beauty. When you ask about his ideas in any realm, you move farther out into the world of common thought and find their meaning there.

When you ask, "Who is man?"—how does he rate in that realm we call personality—you must call before your mind the greatest conception of which you are capable. You must ask, "Who is God?" It seems natural in view of this that one possessed of a knowledge of values and with more insight should say of him, "Thou art the son of God." In this he was giving testimony to the exalted place he allotted to that representative of trust and courage, of sacrifice and faith, of tenderness and strength, who was, on this earth called Jesus of Nazareth. He gave him the highest place to which human loyalty and devotion may assign anyone "born of the flesh."

This Is the Gospel!

He was also giving answer to the old human query, "Who is God?" He is—so this text of the morning would assure us, when we carry it out—the Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Here is a Christmas message for every day, written on both sides of the Christmas card. On one side it reads, "This is the child of God"; on the other it reads, "The giver of this child is God." It identifies the sustainer of this vast universe with the tender fashioner of this loving, this incomparable spirit, this one who laid down his life for his sheep. Paul has it in his letter to the Corinthians, "Though there be many that are called Gods, to us there is but one God, the Father," and he might have said, "Though there are many manifestations of God, the creator of life, the mover of worlds, the inner activity, the mighty power that builds and destroys—there is one we fully recognize—the face of a Father bending down in love above his son.

That is the Christian gospel. The Father of nations and peoples is revealed in the face of our Lord. Is that too much, I ask, to believe this morning, not only to believe but act on, to live in, to feed one's life upon, to utterly trust unto the giving and receiving of strength?

Here is this one, ministering out of the reservoir of his own vast soul to all human life. As he fed the five thousand on the lake shore by the bounty of bread and fish, so he fed, is still feeding, the five millions and five times five hundred millions by the bounty of love and faith which was his life.

Here he is—who is he? Account for him—"not from us," these fishermen disciples say—not from these huts about, not the branch of this tree, the fruit of this soil—not sprung from this school or synagogue—not from the loins of ecclesiasticism. They look about them and do not find his source. They look up—he is from God, he is the Son of God. They answer by that forever—"Who is God?"

God in the Daily Life

By Albert W. Beaven

The Word was made flesh. John 1:14.

AT THE heart of every religion is the conviction that there is a God, and that human beings are attempting to reach him. The thing that differentiates Christianity from other religions is the belief also that God is interested in folks, and that he so attempted to make himself available to them that the person of Jesus is a peculiar revelation both of his attitude and of his availability. This is the very heart of the Christian gospel: that God knows about us, is interested in us, and is attempting to help us.

There are some things in our modern life that make it difficult to grasp this fact of the incarnation and the evident attitude on God's part that is back of it.

One thing is the expansion of the universe. When we measured the distance between the horizons by a day's chariot travel for Apollo, it was not so difficult to believe that God could know and care what happened to individuals in that snug little world. But now that they have made a new measuring-stick called a light year and begin pushing the sky back a thousand or ten thousand light years, and tell us that our sun with its planets is but one of millions of systems which God has made, it is not hard to see why youth trained with this background grasps with difficulty the conception that God, great as he must be, can care enough what happens to any member of the population on this second-rate planet of a third-rate star, to send his Son down to help.

Again, the new ideas of time make it hard. When 4004 B. C. was the date of Adam's birth, and we had a list of the names of men who represented each generation from then to date, one could imagine that God could possibly take a personal interest in each one. But when we are told that man can be traced back as a separate race on this planet for 500,000

years, and that millions of years more have elapsed in getting this world ready for him to reside upon, we are again in danger of losing the sense of God's personal interest in his vastness and eternal being.

But if some things make it hard for a modern person to realize this truth of the incarnation, other things make it easy. For instance, we have come to realize that great power is not incompatible with minute application of that power. The power of gravitation helps to hold the planets in place, but it is

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the same power that will pull your baby's ball back to earth when she tosses it into the air in play.

No; our scientific knowledge makes it easier to understand how God with his greatness can, on account of that, be better able to help in each personal situation.

Understanding the Incarnation

But our mechanical experience makes it easier to understand the incarnation. We know now that for centuries there has been gigantic power lying latent in our waterfalls, in electricity and steam, and in the marvelous waves in the ether. But we know that this power did us no good until it was stepped down and harnessed to our individual needs. Electricity in the thunder-cloud may be real electricity, but to me it spells danger rather than help unless it can be brought down and geared on to my tiny machine.

The wires that cross New York state carrying sixty thousand volts of electricity from Niagara may pass over a farmhouse and leave it dark, unless there is a transformer to bring the power down to one hundred and ten volts, then it becomes a blessing to the individuals along its path.

There are those who like to talk about God as a far-away power, the "Creative Energy," the "Supreme Urge," and other such concepts, but our practical age says to all such: "If there is the power you say there is in this God, tell us how you propose to bring it down so we can use it." If there had been no incarnation, this age would demand it.

But still further, if we feel that we can know something about God by studying those things which he has made, the incarnation seems even more logical. We are all made as individuals; each one is different. We hunger, we love, we suffer, we hope, as individuals. A God who could and did deal with us only in great masses would not answer to the innermost cravings and needs of human life as it is made. Either God must care and want to help us as individuals, or else he has made us wrong. The incarnation and the attitude back of it correspond to every new discovery we make of our profoundest needs.

God and Man's Need

It is this feeling that we need God and his power brought down nearer to man's need that has sent this generation back so eagerly to study Jesus. We naturally feel that in him God "was made flesh." As Paul put it, "God was in Christ." Even those who get into a fog theologically when they get near this scene, yet stay close by, feeling instinctively that in that event they have the most hopeful place in which to explore the possibilities of God coming close to men.

In Jesus we have the assurance that man is not a slave bound with a million other slaves to the clanking mechanism of some titanic galley, sweeping on to destruction. We are free men; we have heard him say, "I call you not slaves, but friends," and feel in our souls that it is true.

It is here that we come face to face with our needs now. If God came down to help in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, if Jesus came and brought healing and salvation to the multitudes then, what about us who are two thousand years removed? Is there no method by which God is stepped down to us now and here? The answer to this is the triumphant consciousness that Christ is a contemporary and not simply a historical figure. He can do *now* what he did *then*. And we moderns need it and crave it.

There may be those who feel that they will satisfy this age by pointing to Jesus of Nazareth as though he were some heroic statue in a niche in some ancient Hall of Fame; or as though he were a fine figure in moral marble like a Venus de Milo, whom we might see far down some two-thousand-year corridor; or as though he were a dead figure protected by a creedal sarcophagus like the prelate in the glass casket in the Cathedral at Milan, lying there for the multitudes who pass to speculate about. But no such Christ will answer the needs of this day with its poignant sense of personal need, backed by its sense of the increasing value of personality.

If God is real and has power to help and ever did help, then we are confident that he can help us, and we seek that help through the same majestic Personality who has revealed God to men across the ages.

Some Secrets of Power in Preaching

By John F. Vichert

"WHAT a pleasure it is," wrote Sir W. Robertson Nicoll, "to hear a man who can speak, when you have heard a lot who can't—what a pleasure and relief it is!" That, I apprehend, is the feeling of the average congregation. It endures, often with ill concealed impatience, the wearisome and monotonous speaker, but how it pricks up its ears and listens with delight when there comes before it one who, to excellence of matter, adds grace and force of delivery! He is always welcome in the pulpit, and there is little sleeping or consulting of watches while he speaks.

Why shouldn't the minister strive to speak well? If he has given care and thought to the sermon it is worthy surely of the best utterance he can command. Indeed, without that it is likely to fail altogether and become what Mr. Beecher described as "the funeral of beautiful thoughts." That is, I fear, the sad fate of many a noble sermon, and it occurs just because we preachers are so often neglectful of those qualities which are required in both matter and manner if the truth involved is to be projected into the minds and hearts of the hearers. For such neglect I can see no possible justification.

• *Truth is Not Enough in Preaching!*

I know very well, however, what some preachers feel and say. They affect a certain contempt for delivery. In their judgment the truth, irrespective of the way in which it is uttered, ought to have weight and power. Dr. Alexander Whyte, writing to a former assistant who was about to preach his first sermon in a parish of his own, admonishes him to attend to its delivery and makes a reference to "young fellows who are tempted to despise delivery because it is popular." But in so far as plain and forceful speaking, whether or not it makes one popular, can gain attention for truth it is surely not to be despised.

This attitude towards delivery is in part created by the whole process of training through which the candidate for the ministry goes. He is engaged almost exclusively with the speculative and throughout is viewing truth in the abstract. He becomes prone to conceive and utter it in that mode. To a young theologue who came to him for instruction a teacher of public speaking said: "Ah, I see you have had all the advantage of a four year college course in the repression of the imagination and the emotions!" He correctly diagnosed the trouble with most of us, and the trouble ordinarily is simply intensified by what the years in a divinity school add to the work of desolation in this realm begun in college.

Indifference in this matter is further confirmed by the remedy often proposed and advocated. This fails to commend itself, and indeed frequently so completely ignores the fundamentals of effective speaking that it proves futile.

• *What About Elocution?*

The common suggestion to the man who has expressed his desire to improve his delivery is that he take a few lessons in elocution. Most of us need them badly enough and no minister can afford to neglect that discipline of voice and body which will make them effective instruments of expression. But they, after all, are external and have to do only with the mechanics of speaking. One man may bring them to perfection and yet come short of effective utterance. Another may neglect them utterly, may be awkward and grotesque in gesture, may have a hoarse, raucous voice which he abuses mercilessly, and yet speak with power because of an inner force which is the life and soul of oratory. "Delivery," wrote Monod, "has its residence not in the mouth but in the sentiment and thought. It depends less on the voice than on the soul. It is at bottom the soul of the speaker which addresses the soul of the hearer."

• *Doing Justice to One's Hearers*

If that were more clearly recognized by ministers they would be more likely to attend to delivery. They would have a more just conception of what it involves and would understand that it is much more than a mere matter of tones and gestures. The preacher must seek to do justice to his subject, but beyond that, and never to be lost sight of for a moment, is the necessity for doing justice to his hearers. These two aims must never be divorced, and if both are kept clearly in mind the whole quality, order, and texture of the discourse will be influenced by them. We are prone to attend only to the truth itself, and to the effort to get it formulated to our satisfaction. But we are to speak it into human ears with a view to winning assent to it, to stirring emotion by it, and to securing decision and action. Preparation for achieving such results reaches back to the subject, to the entire construction of the sermon, and to the speaker's own inner response to his truth.

In general two things must be achieved both in the sermon itself and in its delivery, viz., a climax of thought and a climax of emotion. Mr. Moody said that his method was "to hit a man over the head and thus open his heart." I do not know any better prescription for a successful sermon. There must be laid down a solid basis of fact, some portion of essential truth. This is to be unfolded in an orderly logical way with such precision and clearness that the hearer cannot miss the path which leads from premise to conclusion. Fact is added to fact, reason to reason, until at last the truth is exhibited in full and just proportions.

• *From the Head to the Heart*

But along with this must go another development. Truth in the abstract is cold and even if it reaches the hearer's mind may lie inert there. We must, therefore, in line with Mr. Moody's practice, seek to move from the head to the heart. That is all the more imperative in the case of the preacher because the truth with which he is dealing is calculated to evoke an emotional response. To evade or frustrate that effect is surely to be unfair both to the truth and to human nature. Yet we have allowed ourselves to cherish a certain contempt for emotion. We don't want to be caught with a tear on the cheek or a tremor in the voice. Emotion, however, is one of the great driving powers of life, and if we are to secure action we must present our truth in such a way that emotion is stirred. Religious truth, above all other, is potent in this realm, and as we set it out in clear light we must strive also to present it with such warmth and color that it can produce its natural and proper emotional effect. Further, in this as in the development of thought, there must be progress, so that the appeal to the emotions will strengthen as the sermon proceeds, and come to its climax as the sermon nears its conclusion.

A climax of thought, supported by a climax of emotion, affords the ground for a decisive thrust at the will. This has been the objective

from the beginning, and if the sermon has properly prepared the way for it, it is likely to be achieved. The hearer, intellectually convinced, emotionally moved, will act upon the truth which has been presented.

• *The Miracle of Imagination*

The great instrument whereby preaching may be made thus effective is imagination. Here we come upon that, the absence of which constitutes our greatest source of weakness, the presence and free activity of which give us triumphant soaring power. Let Dr. Cadman emphasize its value for us. In one of his Cole Lectures on "Imagination and Religion," he says: "I unhesitatingly avow that the secret of power in Christian preaching, the spell by which it finds its way into the hidden chambers of the heart, is a sympathetic imagination." I cannot here adequately discuss its uses, but I wish to indicate some of its relations to the apprehension, exhibition, and utterance of truth.

In the first place, truth must be imaginatively conceived. Ruskin may well be our guide here, and his discussion of the matter in "Modern Painters" is most helpful. Imagination is essential even in sense perception. Until it has reinforced the senses we know little of the quality of a material object. Much less do we know truth until we have that insight which imagination alone can give. Further, the truth is not vital and dynamic for us until we see it warm and glowing in the light which imagination kindles.

• *Imagination in the Creative Process*

Again, there can be, there must be an imaginative construction of the discourse. Formal rules of homiletics can help somewhat but no creative work comes out of slavish obedience to rule. There is an ordered freedom in which rules play some part, to be sure, but in every realm of art the masters move by the imagination and thus invest their work with immortality. So must it be with the preacher. Dr. Burton, in his Yale Lectures, finely describes just what ought to happen: "I think that in organizing the materials of a sermon, and getting a skeleton that shall be alive, and physiologically articulated at all the joints, one goes through a mental operation precisely like the painter's when he makes a picture of an original landscape." The speaker uses his materials with intelligent direction but works under the power of a quick and sensitive imagination until the result is not a formal structure but a living organism glowing with force and warmth. Beyond this, imagination will impart energy to style by the wealth of imagery which it will supply, and by the vivid, vigorous, kindling words which it will place at the speaker's command.

• *A Prepared Preacher is Essential*

The relation of all of this to the actual delivery must be apparent. To a young minister who asked, "How shall I prepare my sermons?" Joseph Parker answered, "Prepare yourself." That is the primal and essential matter. The kind of preparation I have been suggesting here applies both to the sermon and the preacher, and if it has been carried through successfully the preacher himself is so prepared in mind and heart that in a very true sense he is his sermon. Dr. Storrs tells of a German witness who, when warned against changing the testimony he had given, said, "I can't change it for it is all mixed up mit my mind." Exactly this must have happened to the preacher so that when he comes before the congregation he is in such a mental and emotional mood that he exhibits not only his truth but also his own reaction to it.

When the truth lies clearly before the speaker with imagination playing upon it until he conceives it vividly, sees it in its relations, discerns its inner spirit, senses its power to waken desire and hope, and is himself profoundly moved by it, when at the very moment of utterance there is some such reaction in him, he can scarcely fail to speak with fervor and prevailing power. The whole man will come into action, his personality all glowing and incandescent under the quickening, kindling force of living truth. Then he can do what Dr. Jefferson so vividly describes: "A preacher is a catapult. He is always hurling things, ideas, arguments, exhortations, expositions. To accomplish his ends he must project himself. His office compels him to throw his soul upon the souls of others." This makes preaching truly a conveying of Christian truth through the potencies of personality, and he who would achieve it must get back of the mechanics of expression to the dynamics, back of the physical to the psychical, there to discover the living secret of effective pulpit oratory.

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Who's Who in This Issue

As minister of the Walnut Street Presbyterian church, Philadelphia, from 1910 to date, Rev. J. A. MacCallum has impressed his personality on the Quaker city in telling fashion. In addition to his ministerial activities, he has led in social service fields: he has headed the board of directors of the Philadelphia Housing association, and has also been a member of the Presbyterian Board of City Missions. Dr. MacCallum is Canadian born, and studied at Queen's university. Coming to the United States, he pursued courses at Columbia, and later received a B. D. degree, *magna cum laude,* from Union seminary. He comes of a family of preachers, being the 23d member of immediate family connection to be ordained in the Presbyterian ministry. Dr. MacCallum has written several books, among them "Now I Know" and "The Great Partnership."

Rev. Teunis E. Gouwens *studied for* a time at Princeton seminary and received his B. D. from New Brunswick seminary, in 1913. He was ordained to the ministry in the Reformed Church in America, and held two pastorates in this fellowship. Since 1921 he has ministered to the Second Presbyterian church, Louisville. Among his books are "The Rock That Is Higher" and "Why I Believe."

*Coming from his first pastorate, in Illi*nois, to Massachusetts, in 1915, Rev. Claude Allen McKay became pastor of First Parish church, Brockton, and in 1923 he began his present ministry at Faith Congregational church, Springfield, Mass. Mr. McKay is stated lecturer at the American School of Religious Education in Springfield, and teacher of the Bible course in the Springfield Community School of Religious Education. His education was received at the Indiana State Normal school, and at the College of Liberal Arts and School of Theology at Boston university. Mr. McKay has published a volume of children's story sermons entitled "Finding Out God's Secrets."

Rev. James Gordon Gilkey *was or*dained in the Presbyterian ministry and has ministered to the South Presbyterian church, Springfield, Mass., since 1917. He had received his A. B. and A. M. degrees at Harvard, his B. D. at Union seminary and he also studied for a time in the Universities of Berlin and Marburg. Dr. Gilkey has endeavored to apply religion to life needs throughout his ministry; he has carried through an elaborate program of institutional church work at Springfield. For years he has been president of the Springfield Symphony orchestra. Many books have come from his pen. The sermon here printed was preached at the Chicago Sunday Evening club.

Having received his A. B. at Pomona college and his B. D. at Pacific School of Religion—with an A. M. also from the University of California—Rev. Roy H. Campbell was ordained in the Congregational ministry in 1910; he had spent several years in Y work, in Portland, Ore., San Diego, Cal., and at the University of California. His first pastorates were at Palo Alto, Oakland and Seattle, and he has ministered to First Congregational church, San Diego, since 1921. During the world war he directed the Pacific coast activities of the Y.

Soon after his ordination in the Baptist ministry, in 1908, Rev. Albert W. Beaven became pastor of the Lake Avenue church, Rochester, N. Y., and there registered unusual success both as preacher and pastor. In 1929 he was called from this ministry to assume the presidency of Colgate-Rochester seminary, from which he had graduated in 1909. At the seminary he has also taught in the field of practical theology. During the world war Dr. Beaven was a Y secretary in this country and in France and Germany. He has been honored by his own denomination and by interdenominational organizations, having been appointed to many posts of responsibility. This sermon on "God in the Daily Life"—of which we print Dr. Beaven's own outline—was recently preached at the Chicago Sunday Evening club.

Rev. Harry Emerson Fosdick *is min*ister of the Riverside church, New York.

Dr. John F. Vichert *is professor* of practical theology at Colgate-Rochester theological school, in the special field of student extra-mural work.

Titles and Texts

What Pulpit Readers are Preaching About

Archie E. Acey, Methodist, North Emporia, Va. "What Are You Worth?" Luke 12:15—"A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth."

Wilfred H. McLain, Christian, Norwood, O. "The Man Who Misjudged God." Matt. 25:24—"Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man."

Richard Radcliffe, Cooper Memorial Methodist, Philedalphia. "The Budget Will be Balanced." Rom. 14:12—"So we see that every one of us will give account of himself to God."

Thomas T. Faichney, Wesley United, Calgary, Alta. "Seeking Security." Heb. 11:8-10—"By faith Abraham . . . . looked for a city whose builder and maker is God."

Roland L. Rupp, Faith Reformed, Baltimore. "My Religion." John 8:32—"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

FOR YOUR SERMON TITLE AND TEXT

. . . . . .
Title of sermon
. . . . . .
Text used (Write out the text)
. . . . . .
Name of minister
. . . . . .
Name of church
. . . . . .
Address

The Editor's Page

The Event of the Month

BY ALL ODDS the most important world event in many years is the definite abandonment of the reparations with which the war victors penalized their vanquished foe. They have been preposterously conceived from the beginning, and could not have been paid even had the world continued in economic prosperity. But the attempt to collect them has been one of the major factors in destroying prosperity and plunging two continents into the depths of depression. They are not any longer to be paid. True, the Lausanne settlement by which Germany agrees to pay 714 million dollars for European reconstruction in lieu of reparations is held in suspense until the debts of European nations to the United States are satisfactorily readjusted. But even should America adopt a hard and irreconcilable attitude, Europe can never go back to the reparations system. It would be psychologically impossible to revive the Young plan. There would be instant revolt in Germany. But those of us who have faith in the American people cannot envisage our government taking a position of legalistic austerity in the face of so superlative an opportunity to appease world-wide international relations and start the wheels of business going again.

No More Reparations!

The Book of the Month

THAT STRANGE LITTLE BROWN MAN: GANDHI, *by Frederick B. Fisher. Published by Ray Long and Richard R. Smith.*

THIS, in my judgment, is the best book on Gandhi for occidental and particularly for American readers that has yet appeared. Doctor Fisher—it is difficult not to call him Bishop Fisher, though he resigned his episcopal office three years or so ago, after a notable administration in India, and returned to the Methodist pastorate, accepting a call to the great church at Ann Arbor, Michigan—senses the western mind's problem involved in understanding Gandhi. To most of us the Mahatma is a kind of eccentric, if not a freak. We hardly see the logic of his position in relation to the vast practical enterprise of securing independence for India. This book shows us the relation between Gandhi's policies and the political reform he is striving to bring about. The spinning wheel becomes no arbitrary symbol but an economic reality. The principle of non-violent non-cooperation rests, to be sure, upon a spiritual and ethical basis, but it is also a method of consummate shrewdness, necessitated by the utter inability of the Indian people to assert themselves effectively against the power of British arms. This non-violent method makes it possible not only for every adult man, but for every woman and even every child in India to be an "effective" in the great struggle against foreign rule. Doctor Fisher throws new light upon the marriage and sex customs of India whose sensational treatment by Miss Mayo is well known. Probably no westerner except C. F. Andrews has been so close to Mr. Gandhi and thus so competent to interpret him as has Doctor Fisher.

A Thought for the Month

IT IS THE STYLE now to be pessimistic. It has been so ever since the war. Our intellectuals are ashamed to make any show of optimism. To be hopeful is Victorian. It is a confession that one is uncritical. Above all, it is a confession that one is not realistic. And realistic one must be if one is to enjoy intellectual distinction. Religion challenges this intellectual fashion. The two cannot live together and they do not live together. When pessimistic realism comes in, religion goes out. Religion is inherently and by nature optimistic. At any rate, an ethical religion is so; and our Christianity is an ethical religion. One function—perhaps the primary function—of an ethical religion is to sustain optimism. We are saved by hope. A hopeless world is a lost world. And those intellectuals who scorn to be optimistic, who revel in their own despair and the futility of the human enterprise, gain attention only because their negationism stands over against the great body of faith and courage and constructive hope which characterizes normal humanity. If things are so bad that there is no ground for hoping that they may be better, the intellectual life itself is condemned. Why take the trouble to analyze and expose the inwardness of things when that inwardness is chaos and meaninglessness? If life's fruits turn to ashes whenever they are tasted realistically, why write a book about it, or a magazine article, or make a speech to demonstrate it, or devote one's career to teaching it in the classroom? There is only one justification for the intellectual life, and that is to improve things, to make them better. A pessimistic realist, if he is logical, must quit thinking, for there is no use thinking at all unless thinking gets some work done. And getting some work done means improvement, construction, creativity. The optimist is thus the only person who has the right to think. He will not be less realistic than the pessimist, indeed he has motives for being more so, for the improvement that he desires must take full account of all the facts. But he has no reason to be ashamed of being hopeful, for hope is the grand presupposition of all intellectual labor.

Optimism and the Intellectual Life

Charles Clayton Morrison

Get Acquainted!

AN ENTHUSIASTIC READER of The Christian Century Pulpit writes that one of its outstanding values, to him, is that the reading of the magazine for nearly three years has given him a great circle of minister friends whom he now feels he knows, having heard them preach. It happens that he goes about the country rather widely, and one of his delights, he says, is that he is always running across some minister whom he had "met" through the Pulpit.

Consider how much better YOU know the preachers of America because you have followed the Pulpit through its nearly three years. And you not only *know* these preachers—you know what kind of *sermons* they preach.

You have heard the men who through long years of service have become household names—Joseph Fort Newton, Charles E. Jefferson, S. Parkes Cadman, James E. Freeman, Robert E. Speer, Lynn Harold Hough, John Haynes Holmes, John Timothy Stone, James I. Vance, Bishop Stewart, Bishop McDowell, Bishop McConnell, Bishop Hughes, Merton S. Rice, Henry Sloane Coffin, William Pierson Merrill, Harry Emerson Fosdick, Peter Ainslie, Charles W. Gilkey, Clarence E. Macartney, F. F. Shannon, Hugh T. Kerr, Mark A. Matthews, Albert Parker Fitch, and many others.

You have become well acquainted with the younger men, many of whom are already widely known as "social prophets"—Niebuhr, Tittle, Luccock, Wicks, Harold Phillips, Oswald McCall, Albert Edward Day; Beaven, Bowie, Buttrick, Sockman, Coe, Krumbine, Chalmers, Kinsolving, Robbins, etc., etc.

And you have also, in your book of acquaintance, scores of able preachers of whom you knew nothing—until you met them in the Pulpit.

PLANS FOR NEXT YEAR are now in the making, and coming numbers will bring you many new and valued friendships. (In the meantime, write the editor and tell him some of the men—or women—YOU would like to have preach from this world-wide "pulpit.")

Get Acquainted—and tell your fellow ministers how they can enlarge their circle of friendship through

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Appreciations

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Accept my best wishes for your great work through the Christian Century and your glorious message through the Pulpit. Caradoc J. Morgan, *First Congregational Church, Sauk Centre, Minn.*

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